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SUBJECT: NORTH MALUKU: GOLKAR, PRESIDENTIAL PROXY FIGHT OVER
GOVERNOR'S RACE ADDS FUEL TO RIOTS

REF: A. (A) Surabaya 48

[1](#)B. Surabaya 20 (and previous)

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This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

[1](#)1. Summary: (SBU) Violence has flared again between the supporters of candidates for North Maluku Governor. Local ethnic friction and Jakarta party politics have made this far flung governor's race drag on for almost six months now. The latest round of violence was reportedly triggered by the June 2 declaration by the Minister for Home Affairs that the incumbents had won reelection. On June 4, supporters of the challengers torched several houses belonging to supporters of the incumbents. June 5 brought more clashes and a cancelled inauguration ceremony. Violent protests in Tidore and Ternate continue while all indications are that North Maluku will finally install incumbents Thaib Armayn and Abdulgani Kasuba whatever the consequences. The only question is when. Rumors circulate that Vice President Jusuf Kalla's behind-the-scenes intervention was again unsuccessful in turning the tide for a Golkar candidate. House Speaker and Golkar Deputy Chairman Agung Laksono has suggested that Golkar withdraw support for the President's government due to a string of similar electoral defeats. End Summary

Home Affairs Ministry Decision Triggers Violence

[1](#)2. (SBU) Violence broke out in Ternate on June 3 between the supporters of North Maluku Governor challengers Abdul Gafur and Fabanyo, supported by Golkar, Party for National Democratic Unity (PDK), and National Mandate Party (PAN) and incumbents Thaib Armayin and Kasuba, supported by Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), Democrat Party, The Crescent Moon Party (PBB), and National Awakening Party (PKB). The clash followed the declaration by the Minister of Home Affairs that the incumbents had won the long-disputed election. Supporters of Abdul Gafur and Fabanyo blocked the city's main street for three hours. This latest decision overturned the recommendation of North Maluku's Parliament who met in plenary session in April (Ref A).

Violence on Tidore

[1](#)3. (SBU) In related violence, four houses were burned and three

other houses were destroyed on Tidore Island on June 3. Ternate Police told Congen Surabaya that the attack was triggered by the Home Affairs Ministry decision and the houses destroyed belonged to the supporters of incumbent. Police sources told us the size of the mob was too large to confront and police were unable to protect the homes. In the early morning of June 4, tensions were still high on Tidore, but according to Alwi of Diahi Radio, violence had not yet spilled over into Ternate.

Police Outmatched by Supporters

14. (SBU) On June 4, roughly 800 supporters of the challenger Abdul Gafur marched from his residence to the Governor's office in Ternate to stage a protest that ended by early afternoon. Simultaneously supporters of the incumbent Thalib gathered near his home in Ternate's Salahudin sub-district. Similar back and fourth skirmishes involving teams of rival supporters throwing stones occurred on June 5. Police put Ternate City on alert and put 1,800 police and three companies of Mobile Brigade forces on alert to prevent rival supporters from clashing. Clashes did occur, but stayed small and the police were able to disperse the crowds from in front of the homes of rival candidates.

Golkar Feels Robbed -- Kalla Weighs In

15. (SBU) Surya Paloh, chairman of Golkar's steering committee, told media that Golkar is disappointed with the decision of the Minister of Home Affairs but supports the President. In shades of a prior Golkar defeat in South Sulawesi's gubernatorial election, Vice President Jusuf Kalla lobbied Minister Mardiyanto for almost an hour according to Surya. The deputy chairman of Golkar, Agung Laksono, asked President Yudhoyono not to sign the Minister's decision. Muddying the waters, Idrus Marham, Golkar's parliamentary leader threatened to file suit against Mardiyanto. According to Alwi of Diahi Radio, Jakarta is more tense than Ternate as Golkar, desperate for a win after a string

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of provincial losses, battles hard for North Maluku. On June 10, Agung Laksono hinted that the victory of a candidate from the President's party at the expense of one from the Vice President's party showed a "lack of proportionality". This threat by Golkar leadership to drop out of President Yudhoyono's coalition is an apparent reaction to events in N. Maluku.

Flash Points Remain

16. (SBU) North Maluku Police told Congen Surabaya that despite continued protests, North Maluku's government is prepared to comply with the Home Affairs Ministry order. Police sources were hopeful that quick installation of a new governor might end the trouble. However the inauguration has been canceled for the time being. Alwi of Diahi Radio told Congen Surabaya that President Yudhoyono has yet to sign the decree installing the incumbents. In another echo of South Sulawesi politics, the central government is reportedly being encouraged to appoint retired general Tanri Lamo, the former acting governor of South Sulawesi, to replace the current caretaker governor.

Complications -- Ethnicity and Corruption

17. (SBU) Indonesian Police are still waiting for permission from President Yudhoyono to question Thaib Armayn for allegedly misusing around Rp. 6.9 billion (USD) from the state budget. Indonesian National Police reportedly took over this case from North Maluku Police as the situation in North Maluku remains unstable and conflict between supporters of the two governor candidates has escalated. Thaib remains free and is regarded as a witness.

18. (SBU) Fachmy Alhaidar Secretary of Muslim organization Al-Khairat in Ternate told Congen Surabaya on June 6 that while

ethnic tension normally simmers just below the surface in North Maluku, it has erupted into clashes over the gubernatorial election. There are three major Muslim ethnic groups in North Maluku: Makian, Petani Maba and Ternate. While the Makian are in the minority, since they tend to be more educated, they are disproportionately represented in the provincial bureaucracy. The incumbent Thaib Armayn is Makian, and has placed fellow Makians throughout the higher echelons of government. Makian bureaucrats are suspected of corruption and nepotism leading the other ethnic groups to vote against Thaib Armayn. They gave their support to Abdul Gafur, who is a Petani Maba. Although many claimed not to like Abdul Gafur's Air Force background, they voted for him anyway since he was the only candidate considered strong enough to beat the incumbent.

MCCLELLAND